the ROHMER REVIEW

No. 1

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The cover illustration is based on, but by no means an exact reproduction of, a portrait of Sax Rohmer by Bertrand Zadig. Zadig's beautiful illustration appeared in Anice Page Cooper's AUTHORS AND OTHERS, Doubleday, Page, 1927. The cover lettering and the illustration on p. 32 are the work of Roy Hunt.

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The contents of this inaugural issue of The Rohmer Review reflect the fact that The Sax Rohmer Society is dedicated to the total literary output of Sax Rohmer, and is not limited to the sinister saga of literature's best known master criminal--Dr. Fu Manchu--although the devil doctor will be given his due in future issues. We hope we can contribute to a wider appreciation of Rohmer's versatility, for some of his best writing appears in some of his lesser known works.

Nowhere is the cliche "one man's meat is another man's poison" more obvious in this issue than in the divergent attitudes Briney and Germeshausen exhibit toward the exploits of Captain O'Hagan. And only by reading the stories can you decide which of them hits closer to the truth--as you perceive it. We encourage our contributers to express their own opinions, but for this very reason it must be made abundantly clear that the views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Review's editorial staff. Comment from the readers is welcomed, and criticism which is of a concrete and constructive nature can be published in future issues.

The Rohmer Review No. 1 July 1968
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After a period in Fleet Street, Ward left journalism to try free-lance writing. His first fiction sales were short stories of mystery and suspense or historical adventure, published in various magazines starting in 1904. He entered seriously on a free-lance writing career by renting an office in Limehouse, adopting the name "Sax Rohmer," and living on "bread, cheese, onions, and no cash." The break came when Newman Fowler purchased his first novel, THE SINS OF SEVERAC BABLON, for serialization in Cassell's Magazine. Even as the installments of that novel were appearing, another character was taking shape in Rohmer's mind, a character who was to bring him world-wide fame (not to mention some two million dollars in royalties)--Dr. Fu Manchu.

"SEEK NOT MY ASHES. I AM THE LORD OF THE FIRES!"

The exploits of Fu Manchu and his battles with his would-be Nemesis, Nayland Smith of Scotland Yard, are chronicled in thirteen books, which span the whole of Rohmer's forty-seven year literary career. His first book was THE MYSTERY OF DR. FU MANCHU, published in England in June 1913, and issued later that year in the United States as THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU-MANCHU; his last was EMPEROR FU MANCHU, published in England only two months before the author's death on June 1, 1959. In the intervening years the "evil yellow doctor" was featured not only in books but in radio and television serials, and in several motion pictures. Rohmer also, in 1947, wrote a play about Fu Manchu, but it remains unpublished and unproduced. Finally, there are three Fu Manchu stories, which thus far have appeared only in magazines: in This Week in the U.S. and in the Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine in England.

The Fu Manchu saga was originally intended to consist of only three books. These appeared as series of related short stories in Collier's Weekly: the ten episodes of the first book in the spring of 1913, those of THE RETURN OF DR. FU-MANCHU between November 1914 and December 1915, and those of THE HAND OF FU MANCHU between April 1916 and June 1917. Each of these twenty-nine episodes follows the same basic pattern: Nayland Smith and the narrator, Dr. Petrie (whose first name is never mentioned in the stories), either are a) menaced by one of Fu Manchu's exotic death-traps, b) captured by the doctor's minions, or c) engaged in trying to foil a murderous

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attempt on the life of someone who Knows Too Much. In about half of the episodes they escape either by luck or by their own efforts; in the rest their escape is effected by the beautiful Karamaneh (the name is Arabic for "confidential slave"), one of Fu Manchu's company who has fallen in love with Petrie.

At the end of each of these three books, Fu Manchu is "killed:" trapped in a burning house in the first, and shot through the head (by Karamaneh) in the second. The third death was at the time intended to be permanent. Fu Manchu had been disowned and sentenced to death by the Si-Fan, the secret organization which he had employed to further his own ends. The Si-Fan was broken up by Scotland Yard, and in an attempt to flee the country by sea Fu Manchu was caught in a storm in the Channel, shipwrecked, and presumably drowned. Petrie married Karamaneh and retired to Egypt, and Nayland Smith set off in pursuit of less colorful and undoubtedly less dangerous foes. And there matters were allowed to rest for fourteen years--years which saw the publication of seventeen other books and the production of two plays.

With the serialization of DAUGHTER OF FU MANCHU in 1930, however, it became clear that drowning at sea had been no more fatal to the durable Oriental than had his earlier "deaths." After a lapse of fourteen years, Fu Manchu's daughter, Fah Lo Suee, sets about reviving and reorganizing the Si-Fan. She causes so much trouble that at last Fu Manchu himself, old and lame, emerges from retirement to join forces with Nayland Smith and bring about her downfall. However, the taste of power stimulates the Doctor's own ambitions, and in THE MASK OF FU MANCHU he is once again scheming for world dominion in the old familiar way. He has also managed to grow younger, thanks to an elixir of life developed in his secret laboratories. This book and the previous one are set mainly in the Near East, and are narrated by a young archaeologist named Shan Greville. Dr. Petrie and Inspector Weymouth, from the earlier books, play subsidiary roles.

In FU MANCHU'S BRIDE the Doctor's activities move to the French Riviera. The book is narrated by Alan Sterling, an orchid hunter by profession. The damsel in distress is named Fleurette, and she turns out to be a long-lost daughter of Dr. Petrie and Karamaneh. Sterling and Fleurette are featured again in THE TRAIL

OF FU MANCHU, the first of the series to be told in third-person rather than first-person form. Here Fu Manchu becomes particularly fiendish; he operates a large blast-furnace in a cavern under Limehouse, where he uses human bodies as fuel in an alchemical process for making gold. In PRESIDENT FU MANCHU the scene shifts to the New World; the plot is a faint foreshadowing of Richard Condon's THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE. At the end of this book Fu Manchu is once again "killed"--swept over Niagara Falls in a small boat. This does not inhibit his appearance in the following volume, THE DRUMS OF FU MANCHU, which is set in England, Paris, and Venice. Finally, in THE ISLAND OF FU MANCHU, the locale shifts to Haiti, and zombies and voodoo rites are added to the more traditional ingredients of Fu Manchu's arsenal. The five volumes just mentioned offer the best portions of the entire series. The writing is smoother, the pace faster, the exotic locales and weird inventions more plentiful and more excitingly depicted than in the previous books. The fantastic biological laboratory on the Riviera and the cavern-world under Haiti are a far cry from the dingy Chinatown haunts of the first three volumes in the series.

Fu Manchu hibernated during the war years, but returned in 1948 in SHADOW OF FU MANCHU. Having become somewhat mellowed in his old age (of one hundred plus), he is now fighting on the side of the good guys: "My mission is to save the world from the leprosy of Communism." His methods, however, have not changed. He is still served by dacoits and zombies, and still uses the poisoned darts (tipped with "B.W. 63, of which I had a little left") with which he tried to kill Nayland Smith at their first meeting in the Burmese jungle thirty-five years previously. Like all of the Fu Manchu books since TRAIL, SHADOW is told in the third person. The writing is livelier than usual for Rohmer, and there are touches of humor. Some of the latter is unintentional, as when Fu Manchu instructs a hypnotized girl, "Tonight you will seduce him with your hair. The rest I shall leave to him . . . ."

It is easy to believe that by this time Rohmer had become heartily tired of his most famous creation. In RE-ENTER FU MANCHU, published as a Gold Medal Original paperback in the U.S. and in hard covers in England, we get a weary re-telling of the typical Fu Manchu plot.

The action moves (but just barely) from London to Cairo to New York, and the "hero" stands around doing nothing except complain that he is doing nothing, and staring in stupefaction when practically everyone turns out to be someone else in disguise. The final Fu Manchu book, EMPEROR FU MANCHU, is unlike any other Rohmer book in style and atmosphere. Parts of it resemble an unsuccessful pastiche of previous stories. Present-day Communist China is an unsuitable locale for the kind of story-book Oriental menace which was one of the charms of the earlier books. The Cold Men--Fu Manchu's army of zombies--inspire no dread, and the Doctor himself has become a parody, reduced to the two extreme postures of quiet menace and maniacal rage. It is a poor quietus for so honorable a villain; in the words of Nayland Smith, "an assassin, a torturer, the most dangerous criminal the law has ever known; but always an aristocrat."

"ARE YOU ADMIRING MY JUSTLY CELEBRATED LEGS?"

On any list of "the worst of Sax Rohmer," THE EMPEROR OF AMERICA would come very near the top. It is virtually a parody of the Rohmer style. It was specifically written as a magazine serial (stretching through nine and a half months in Collier's), and the breaks between installments are easily recognizable. Each installment ends with a suitable punch-line ("Unless I am greatly mistaken," Roscoe replied, "M. Pasçal is Head Centre!"), and the first few paragraphs of the following chapter are devoted to setting a new scene, reintroducing the leading characters, and summarizing the plot situation. Since this situation changes very little in the course of the book, Rohmer was able to carry over whole paragraphs bodily from one installment to the next.

The forces of law and order are represented by Commander Drake Roscoe of the U.S. Navy (a dead ringer for Nayland Smith) and Dr. Stopford, a ship's doctor on the Cunard Line (fashioned from the same mold as Dr. Petrie, even to the lack of a first name). Opposing them is a set-up known as The Zones, a subversive organization to end all subversive organizations--Head Centre, one of the controlling officers, turns out to be an ex-Governor of New York and current Presidential candidate, although the mastermind, Great Head Centre, is a mere duchess with delusions of grandeur. The goal of

The Zones is the overthrow of the United States government and the establishment of an American Empire. Comparison with Fu Manchu and the Si-Fan is inevitable. However, there is no Oriental touch here; the minions of Great Head Centre are not Chinamen, dacoits, or members of African secret societies, but Jews, Italians, Negroes, Germans, etc.

The whole mess is topped off with pure comic-book dialogue. Stopford, dropping final "g's" in every direction, is indistinguishable from Reggie Fortune in every respect except intelligence. And the Americans in the cast can be recognized by the frequency with which they exclaim "Gee!"

THE EMPEROR OF AMERICA was published in 1929. Some twenty years later, in his last series of books, Rohmer resurrected Drake Roscoe (now an American Secret Service agent) to battle against the Order of Our Lady, the inevitable secret organization threatening world peace. This organization was the creation of the Marquise Sumuru, otherwise known as the Madonna, and was dedicated to "purging the world of ugliness, and destroying the rule of brute force." This was to be accomplished by placing women in control of everything--including men. ("Women were designed by their Creator to be not men's mistresses but their masters.") Sumuru's main weapon in this crusade was sex, and for those important men whose control she could not trust to any of the lesser Sisters of the Order, she reserved the ultimate refinement of this weapon--herself. For some reason never made clear, she includes Roscoe in this select group, so that when, in the concluding pages of SUMURU, he bursts into her hideout, he finds her waiting for him. (She has been whiling away the time with her favorite diversion--skinny-dipping in her penthouse pool with a pet barracuda named Satan). There is a quick tumble among the mink rugs, and when reinforcements arrive a few moments later, they find the apartment empty.

When next encountered, in THE FIRE GODDESS, Roscoe is known only as Drakos, a faithful but not-too-satisfied member of the Order of Our Lady. The locale this time is Jamaica, where Sumuru has to contend not only with the police and an Inspector from Scotland Yard, but also with a rebellion in her own ranks. One of her disciples, Sister Melisande, has revived old voodoo practices and employed them to usurp Our Lady's authority. In the end,

Sumuru deals with the recalcitrant Sister, having her body turned to stone and presented to the people of Jamaica as a gruesome statue. More by accident than design Roscoe manages to betray Sumuru. She is forced to flee Jamaica, and he is released from his bondage.

However, he never learns. In the next book, RETURN OF SUMURU, he invades Our Lady's Egyptian headquarters to rescue the daughter of an American millionaire whom Our Lady has kidnaped. He succeeds in this objective, but in the process he falls in love with Sister Dolores, Sumuru's second-in-command. The book ends as he leaves the rescued girl and her lover, and prepares to rejoin the Order. It seems that his reception is somewhat less than satisfactory, for the final book, SINISTER MADONNA, opens with Roscoe, near death from having been beaten and tortured, babbling in delirium in a hospital room. He recovers, physically at least, and there is some foofaraw as he foils Sumuru's attempts to obtain the legendary Seal of Solomon. At the end of the book he again departs to rejoin Dolores and the Order. This is the last we hear of either of them, or of Sumuru.

The first book in this series, NUDE IN MINK, takes place in England, and does not involve Roscoe. The plots of all five books are virtually identical, and they can be read in any order with no loss of continuity.

"I SPEAK ALL KINDS OF ENGLISH. TELL ME WHICH KIND YOU PREFER."

Neither Nayland Smith nor Drake Roscoe is in any sense a detective. The villainies they encounter are seldom subtle enough to require any detection. Rohmer did, however, create several fictional detectives. In THE SINS OF SEVERAC BABLON, Rohmer makes reference to "the three great practical investigators of the world." The greatest of them all, M. Victor Lemage of Paris, appears in person in the latter half of the novel, while a second is merely mentioned by name: Mr. Brinsley Monro of Dearborn Street, Chicago. The third member of the famous trio, Mr. Paul Harley of Chancery Lane, was later featured in a series of novels and stories.

The first of Rohmer's detectives to have a book of his own was M. Gaston Max, of the Paris Surete. M. Max was a virtual carbon copy of Lemage; it was as if Rohmer regretted the latter's retirement at the end of SEVERAC BABLON and decided to let him continue his career under

another name. Max, like Lemage (and all of Rohmer's other detectives), is a master of disguise and mimicry, and makes heavy use of both skills in his pursuit of criminals. Max's first appearance was in THE YELLOW CLAW (serialized in Lippincott's Magazine in 1915, and published in book form in the same year). The malefactor in this novel is a mysterious "Mr. King," agent of a Sublime Order, which is suspiciously like the Si-Fan. The villain of THE GOLDEN SCORPION is revealed at the end to be an agent of Fu Manchu himself, and the latter makes a brief anonymous appearance in the book. These two novels are set in London's Chinatown, and are perfect examples of the "Yellow Peril" school of thriller prevalent in the years before World War I. They are filled to overflowing with opium dens and sinister Chinamen; but it is pleasant to note that there isn't a tong in either of them.

Like Fu Manchu, Max was allowed to slumber during the 1920's. He reappeared in 1930 in THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED. This is the only book in any of Rohmer's connected series in which the fantasy or science-fictional element is dominant. The action takes place in and near the Black Forest in Germany, whither reporter Brian Woodville has been sent to investigate rumors of an outbreak of vampirism: bodies of men and animals drained of blood, and huge bat-like creatures seen flying over the countryside at night. Woodville is warned by a disembodied voice to leave the area. He himself sees one of the flying creatures, watching it land and disappear among the tombs in the local cemetary. He investigates the ruined castle of Felsenweir, and finds its crumbling walls patrolled by seven-foot men in armor--and at this point, the plot comes back (almost) to earth. Gaston Max makes his appearance by the simple expedient of removing the disguise behind which he has been hiding for seventy-five pages, and reveals that the weird goings-on are not supernatural in nature, but are the work of a genuine Mad Scientist, complete with death-ray, Buck Rogers-type flying suits, and plans to conquer and/or destroy the world. Fortunately, this more mundane explanation does nothing to diminish the excitement and suspense of the book.

Max then retires for another thirteen years, returning for the last time in SEVEN SINS to track down a Nazi spy ring in wartime London. His investigations this time are

complicated by a titled Englishman who dabbles in the occult, and by an impossibly all-American-boyish Air Force lieutenant ("Put up your hands, because I am going to thrash you until I am tired."), but with the help of half a dozen well-chosen disguises, he emerges victorious.

The tongs which are lacking in the Chinatown episodes of the Fu Manchu and Gaston Max books are present in full force in the stories of Daniel "Red" Kerry, Chief Inspector (later Superintendent) in the C.I.D. The two short stories, "The Daughter of Huang Chow" and "Kerry's Kid," are set in London's Limehouse, and are filled to overflowing with opium dens, tong wars, dope smuggling, and white slavery. Rohmer may not have invented the notion of the "wily Chinese," but these books epitomize the idea. The sinister, fog-shrouded Limehouse of which he writes may never have existed, but it takes on vivid life in the pages of these books.

Paul Harley was a closer approximation to the traditional fictional detective. He first appeared in three short stories (Collier's, 1920) which were part of a connected sequence later included in the collection TALES OF CHINATOWN. His best known cases are recounted in the novels BAT WING and FIRE-TONGUE. The former is a straightforward and fairly good murder mystery. Sandwiched in the middle of it is an episode with strong fantasy elements, centering around Haitian voodoo. As John Dickson Carr was later to do in such books as HE WHO WHISPERS, Rohmer threw in this fantasy episode as a red herring, and the mystery turns out to have an entirely mundane solution. In FIRE-TONGUE, Harley is involved with a sect of Indian fire-worshippers on the loose in England. This book, too, has a brief fantasy episode interpolated into it. The only other Harley story of any substance is a short novel, "The Black Mandarin" (Collier's, 1922; included in TALES OF EAST AND WEST), set in the same Chinatown locale as the first three short stories. There are at least five other short stories featuring Paul Harley. One of them is a borderline weird tale, "The Red Mist," which for some reason was included in certain of the British reprint editions of THE QUEST OF THE SACRED SLIPPER, a novel totally unrelated to Harley. Another short story, "At the Palace da Nostra" (Collier's, 1930), appears in the U.S. edition of TALES OF EAST AND WEST. Three further

"investigations of Paul Harley" were included in SALUTE TO BAZARADA AND OTHER STORIES.

Predictably enough, Rohmer also turned his hand to the creation of a psychic detective. The result was one of his most satisfying books, THE DREAM DETECTIVE, published in England in 1920 and in the United States five years later. It consists of ten episodes[1] (four of them from All-Story in 1915) in which Morris Klaw uses his method of "psychic photography" to investigate cases of haunting, possession, and other occult phenomena, as well as a couple of ordinary murders. Klaw is one of Rohmer's most fascinating characters: tall and stoop-shouldered, "a very old man who carries his many years lightly, or a younger man prematurely aged; none can say which." He poses as an antiquarian and keeps a musty curio shop, cluttered with broken statuary and old books, and inhabited by canaries and white rats, a pet owl, and a parrot whose only words seem to be "Morris Klaw! Morris Klaw! The Devil's come for you!" Klaw lives in the back of the shop, sharing a small apartment with his daughter, Isis. Klaw's actual identity and true personality are things on which no two of his acquaintances agree, for he, like Rohmer's other detectives, is adept at assuming many roles. Although his cases are less well known than those of such confreres as John Silence, Carnacki the Ghost-Finder, and Jules de Grandin, they are no less fascinating. Two of the cases, "The Chord in G" and "The Haunting of Grange," are especially fine crime stories, and "The Veil of Isis" is an eerily effective fantasy.

The last of Rohmer's family of detectives to appear in book form was Major Mohammed Ibrahim Brian Baruk, an Anglo-Egyptian. The ten short stories about Baruk, collected in 1944 under the title BIMBASHI BARUK OF EGYPT, are equally divided between detective stories with an English setting and stories of espionage and international intrigue in the Near East. Of either type, they are smoothly written, entertaining, and completely forgettable.

One other of Rohmer's series characters deserves mention. He is Bernard De Treville--adventurer, Secret Service agent, and tracker-down of lost treasures. During the period from September 1937 to May 1945, sixteen short stories featuring De Treville were

[1] The British edition omits one episode, "The Chord in G."

published in This Week magazine. These stories have never been collected in book form, although several of them such as "The Mystery of the Paneled Room" and "The Secret of the Ruins," have been reprinted in anthologies.

"WATCH OUT FOR THE DEVIL AT YOUR ELBOW . . . ."

Sax Rohmer's first novel, THE SINS OF SEVERAC BABLON, is a peculiar affair. Whatever attractions it once had have largely been worn away by the years, and it now appears heavy-handed and crudely written. Although written in 1910 or 1911 and serialized in Cassell's Magazine in 1912, before the first Fu Manchu stories were written, it was Rohmer's second published book. It has never been published in the U.S., although it remained in print in England until the mid-Thirties.

Severac Bablon was a descendent of the Royal House of Israel, the pure line of descent having been preserved in secret since the breakup of the Kingdom after the time of Solomon, and could command the allegiance of the world's eight million Jews. (This was 1914.) He was, in appearance, young, dark, and handsome, and was given to smoking opium cigarettes, which he carefully left burning in ashtrays as "calling cards." He was filled with noble ideals--or at any rate, one noble ideal--but aside from this he appears now to have been cut from the same pattern as Fu Manchu, Yu'an Hee See, "Mr. King," and Rohmer's other Oriental villains. He was possessed of enormous wealth and secret influence, was attended by deferential Arab servitors, and had hordes of silent henchmen who climbed up the sides of buildings and used an eerie minor-key whistle as their signal. He was also, to judge by his actions, slightly simple-minded.

Bablon probably is best described as a sort of Jewish Robin Hood. His victims were always rich, miserly Jews. Sometimes he robbed them outright, but more often, by threats, trickery, or blackmail, forced them to donate vast sums to charities and "worthy projects." As he at one point stated his purpose to one of his victims:

> "You are found guilty, Israel Hagar, of dragging through the mire of greed a name once honored among nations. It is such as you that have earned for the Jewish people a repute it ill deserves. You have succeeded in staining [the Jewish name]. I have a mission. It is to erase that stain."

One of Bablon's worthy projects was the building of an airfleet for Britain. Another involved alleviating the suffering of the poor and unemployed by going out into slum districts of London and throwing handfuls of gold coins into the crowds (thereby starting riots in which several people were injured). But perhaps his greatest achievement was the prevention of the First World War; by frightening and blackmailing the financiers involved (all Jewish), he prevented a loan to Germany with which that country had intended to wage war on Britain. "For this will be forgotten all my errors, forgiven all my sins!" Apparently Bablon's followers were looking the wrong way at Sarajevo on June 28th.

The following newspaper clipping (ca. 1936)[2] provides an ironic footnote to the book:

SAX ROHMER TELLS GERMANY HE'S IRISH, NOT JEW

London, Feb. 13--The banning of Sax Rohmer's books in Germany, supposedly on the ground that Rohmer is a Jew, will be protested by the writer, who turns out to be a good Irishman. His full name is Arthur Sarsfield Ward and he has full-blooded Irish parents on both sides.

Before sailing at Southampton today for New York, he said: "The only explanation I and my agents can think of for the Germans banning my books is that they think I am a Jew, and that, of course, is ridiculous. Naturally, I am protesting against the banning and have asked the authorities, through my agents, to explain."

A few short years later Rohmer's books proudly carried on the copyright page the notice that his books had been banned by the Gestapo in 1936.

Unlike many of Rohmer's other books, THE SINS OF SEVERAC BABLON retains mostly curiosity value. Had it been written entirely in the style of a thriller, in which vein Rohmer from the first showed considerable facility, it would have fared better. Instead, the book

[2] The exact date of the clipping, as well as the newspaper(s) in which it appeared, are unknown. The clipping was pasted on the flyleaf of a cheap reprint edition of BATWING that I bought several years ago in Boston.

continually attempted to treat in a serious manner an essentially ludicrous theme. This combines with a pervasive infelicity of style ("Zoe Oppner entered the room, regally carrying her small head . . .") to produce an almost total debacle.

THE ORCHARD OF TEARS is an entirely different type of book. It is the closest that Rohmer ever came to writing a "serious" novel. It is a near-fantasy, but is written in a quiet and restrained style. All the occult forces and Unseen Powers are kept in the background. Occasionally this makes for dull reading, but the overall impression is still very good.

The protagonist is Paul Mario, a successful poet and playwright who, after years of meditation and study of ancient manuscripts, has built up certain Egyptian and other pre-Christian teachings into a religio-philosophical system for the modern world. This system includes everything from the Hermetic concept of God and Creation to a belief in reincarnation. Mario is doubtful about publishing his philosophy, but is urged to do so by an influential neighbor, financier Jules Thessaly. The publication of "The Gates," the first section of his book, has widespread consequences not only in literary and political circles throughout the world, but also on the population at large. (We are only told about these consequences at second hand; they are never described in detail.) These consequences cause Mario to doubt the wisdom of publishing further sections of his book. He comes to realize that "he has given life to something which has lain dormant, occult, for untold ages, that he has created a thing which already has outgrown his control." Also, he begins to suspect that Thessaly may have urged publication of the book precisely for the purpose of unleashing this unspecified occult force.

There is a wandering sub-plot concerning a young artist named Flamby Duveen, Mario's protege. As the book progresses, her life and Mario's become more and more intertwined, and the situation builds up to a tragic ending (the only one in any of Rohmer's novels).

The book is full of unrelieved anti-German sentiment, which is only natural, considering that it was published in 1918, less than three weeks before the Armistice. Aside from this, the overall impression given by the book is that of restraint. Never again did Rohmer exercise such discipline over his imagination.

With the publication of THE QUEST OF THE SACRED SLIPPER a year later, Rohmer's imagination was on the loose again. This one is about the Hashishin, the ancient Order of Assassins, who are sent to England to punish, in bloody fashion, the theft from Mecca of a slipper believed to have been worn by Mohammed. The story of the attempts to regain the sacred slipper makes a suspenseful Oriental thriller, but there are no plot elements which entitle it to be classed as a fantasy.

MOON OF MADNESS is the only novel by Rohmer without a single fantastic or Oriental/Egyptian touch. (Even the suspense novel HANGOVER HOUSE has an Egyptian seer wandering around in it.) It is a love story, written in a most inane style, combined with a tale of Communist agents (vintage 1927) plotting evil doings in Madeira and London. It has sinister South Americans, compromising letters, a couple of cryptograms, coincidences galore, and a cast consisting of inert clods.

SHE WHO SLEEPS offers a distinct contrast. It revolves around a perfect fantasy situation: in an ancient Egyptian manuscript is found the record of a young captive princess in the court of Seti I, who was placed in a state of suspended animation and entombed, to awake in a later age as a living advertisement of the greatness of Seti and his kingdom. The manuscript not only gives the location of the princess's tomb, and the recipe for awaking her from her age-long sleep, but also contains codicils added at intervals during a three-hundred-year period following the entombment, recording several trial awakenings. Guided by this manuscript, millionaire Egyptologist John Cumberland sets out to uncover the tomb of Zalithea, "She Who Sleeps But Who Will Awaken." The tomb is discovered and opened, the ancient reawakening ritual is performed, and Zalithea awakens.

Unfortunately, SHE WHO SLEEPS is not a fantasy. Zalithea and her tomb turn out to be part of an elaborate hoax, and the book which opened on a note of supernatural mystery and continued in an unreal atmosphere of a fantasy ends on a thoroughly mundane level. However, this does not detract in the least from the effectiveness of the middle portion, which describes the excavation of the tomb and the awakening of Zalithea. This entire episode is brought to life in vivid and meticulous detail, pleasantly leavened with humor. There is, for example, the problem of how to obtain a pass-

port for a girl whose legal guardians have been dead for three thousand years.

Despite the let-down at the end, this remains one of Rohmer's best books. The annoying elements of his style are at a minimum, and the virtues at a maximum.

Although YU'AN HEE SEE LAUGHS opens in the midst of fog-shrouded Limehouse, the action quickly shifts to warmer climes: via Paris and Marseilles to Port Said, and finally to a small island in the Red Sea, off the coast of Yemen. It is to this island that the Marquis Yu'an Hee See has summoned his criminal employees from all over Europe and the Orient for some unspecified large-scale operation, and it is to this island that several of these employees have been traced by Scotland Yard inspector Dawson Haig. His suspicions having first been aroused by the Marquis' activities in fencing stolen goods in London, Haig soon learns that much more is involved: narcotics smuggling, and both black and white slave traffic. But even these are only sidelines, and the real purpose behind the gathering in the Red Sea remains a secret until too late.

Yu'an Hee See is known to his employees as "Mr. King," the same alias used by the never-identified mastermind in THE YELLOW CLAW; however, there is no overt connection between the two books. Rohmer may have been trying to start a second series to rival the Fu Manchu books: Yu'an is referred to as "perhaps the most evil man in the civilized world." He is certainly a far more vicious and unpleasant creation than Fu Manchu. However, even though he escapes unscathed at the end of the book, he never reappears in any further stories.

The book is graced by Eileen Kearney, possibly the most annoying heroine in the Rohmer opera. She has been provided with such idiotic dialogue that the moment she opens her mouth, one becomes impatient for the villains to come along and shut her up.

There are similarities in locale and plot situations between YU'AN HEE SEE LAUGHS and the novel WHITE VELVET. In the latter novel, Rohmer for the first and last time created characters who were not exotic stereotypes or mere bundles of eccentricities. The first half of the book centers around The Kofmanns, a vaudeville troupe performing at the Folies Egyptiennes in Port Said: Pa Kofmann, the domineering and slow-witted head of the family, who cannot understand why the customers would

rather ogle the girls in the chorus than watch him lift weights; Ma Kofmann, colorless, quiet, and hardworking, who alone of the Kofmann family does not hate or despise Pa; "Little Miss" Sally, their granddaughter, an accomplished acrobat, dancer, and mimic at the age of seven; and the star attraction, Musette (nee Elizabeth Morton), a husky-voiced singer whom Pa hired when she was stranded and out of work, and who is kept busy dodging his heavy-handed attentions. These, and the other members of the family, are brought vividly and interestingly to life.

But, as if unsure of his ability to carry them through a more prosaic plot, Rohmer set them down in the midst of a melodramatic tangle of narcotics smugglers and Secret Service agents, kidnaping, and murder. Musette falls in love with Lawrence Tabrer, who is on the trail of the kingpin of a drug syndicate. The latter is known only as "Snow Rat." Through the machinations of one of the syndicate members, Tabrer is persuaded that Musette is a member of the gang and has tried to have him killed; at the same time, Musette is tricked into believing that Tabrer has deserted her. She leaves the Kofmanns and goes off to Istanbul. The last half of the book chronicles her adventures there, where she plays a part in the eventual break-up of the syndicate. The revelation of the true identity of "Snow Rat" is no surprise to any mildly attentive reader, but it imparts an enjoyably ironic tone to the concluding scenes of the book. The book contains no hint of fantasy. The Near Eastern atmosphere is evoked with uncommon skill and economy, and the book contains much of Rohmer's best writing.

The last Rohmer novel to be serialized in Collier's, and the last of Rohmer's books to appear in hard covers in the United States, was HANGOVER HOUSE. It is a fair detective novel in the classic English tradition: an assorted cast of characters assembles in a fog-bound country house, and very quickly one of their number turns up in a pool of blood, with a silver dagger sticking in him. Enter Scotland Yard, and the deduction is on. Apparently out of a sense of obligation to his readers, Rohmer included in the cast a mysterious Egyptian, who pops up occasionally to quote bad proverbs and give advice. He is quite properly ignored by everybody. A startling moment is provided halfway through the book,

when the corpse suddenly decides to get up and walk around (promptly to collapse of a heart attack), but even this is explained away in a relatively mundane manner at the denouement.

THE MOON IS RED was the last of Rohmer's non-series novels. It appeared only in England (in 1954), and the American publishers who have ignored it thus far have missed a bet. It is certainly the best of Rohmer's last dozen books. The locale is the east coast of Florida, and the framework is that of a detective novel. Simultaneously with the escape from the Ringbarn circus of an intractable male gorilla, there occurs the first of a series of brutal murders. The escaped gorilla is the natural suspect, until it is learned that two similar murders had occurred months earlier in Paris and London. The first of these victims was the estranged wife of a Parisian acrobat named Gene Marat; Marat was in London at the time of the second killing, and is now in Florida. All the victims were young, beautiful, red-haired women; all had been strangled, and then stripped and savagely beaten; all had been found in rooms locked from the inside, and having windows accessible only to some abnormally acrobatic creature. About the bodies were strewn shreds of paper and clothing, torn by strong teeth. And the killings had all occurred on nights when the moon was full.

At this point, the reader crosses his fingers and begins hoping that the ending will not be a disappointment. It isn't. Several wild hints in the early part of the book, which seem at the time to be red herrings, turn out to be all too pertinent; and the ending fully lives up to expectations.

" . . . AT THIS MOMENT I AM AMONG THE DEAD."

Almost all of Rohmer's novels first appeared as magazine serials, and it was only toward the end of his career that he ceased to tailor the stories deliberately for this medium. All the early novels were written in convenient installment-sized chunks, and since Rohmer did no rewriting for the book versions, these novels are noticeably episodic. It is usually possible to reconstruct the original serial installments from the book versions.

This is certainly the case with Rohmer's first fantasy, BROOD OF THE WITCH QUEEN. The latter two-

thirds of the novel appeared serially in Munsey's Magazine in 1923, and the U.S. hardcover edition appeared in 1924. However, the novel dates from much earlier in Rohmer's career. The first magazine serialization was in 1914, even before the appearance of the second Fu Manchu serial. The story falls readily into nine episodes, each centered around one particular bit of ancient Egyptian sorcery at work in the modern world. The third of these episodes is virtually unconnected with the remainder of the book, and constitutes in its own right an excellent short tale of vampirism. In the rest of the episodes, Antony Ferrara, a young man of mysterious antecedents, employs ancient witchcraft to murder his adoptive father, the Egyptologist Sir Michael Ferrara, and attempts to gain control of Sir Michael's estate. He is opposed by Sir Michael's life-long friend Dr. Bruce Cairn, and the latter's son. Dr. Cairn and his son are the only people who know of Ferrara's sorcerous activities, and even though they have personally witnessed experiments in anthropomancy and even less pleasant arts, they have no legal proof with which to confront Ferrara. It is ultimately left to Dr. Cairn to use his own knowledge of arcane matters to defeat the fire elemental which Ferrara sends against him, and to bring about Ferrara's destruction.

BROOD OF THE WITCH QUEEN is Rohmer's most fantastic book, probably the best known outside of the Fu Manchu series, and at the same time one of the rarest. It is definitely one of his best.

Rohmer's second fantasy was THE GREEN EYES OF BAST. This was his contribution to the literature of the were-animal. It begins as newspaperman Jack Addison finds himself followed to his home one evening by a shadowy figure, and watched through the window by a pair of enormous glittering cat-like eyes. When the grounds are examined the next morning, the only signs of the nocturnal visitor are several deep imprints of a woman's high-heeled shoes. This is Addison's introduction to Nahema, the cat-woman. She is not a were-cat in the conventional sense, but a teratological sport whose feline tendencies and attributes become dominant during the Sothic month of Phanoi, sacred to the Egyptian cat-headed goddess, Bast. Nahema is engaged in terrorizing (and decimating) the Coverly family, for whom she has conceived a deep hatred. Her guardian, a mad scientist type named Dr.

Damar Greefe, is forced to aid her in her program. He is finally done in when Nahema goes wild and escapes his control, but not before he manages to deliver a three-chapter dying confession to Addison, which reveals the secret of Nahema's birth and the reason for her animosity toward the Coverlys. He also reveals that she is dying of tuberculosis, and will shortly cease to be a menace to anyone.

Most of the fantasy elements are almost rationalized out of existence, but not quite. The concluding chapters are a distinct let-down after the thrilling events which led up to them.

The similarities between GREY FACE and the Barre Lyndon play THE MAN IN HALF MOON STREET are so striking that the Rohmer novel might well have served as a source for the play. The central figure in both works is a man who has succeeded in renewing his youth and prolonging his life far beyond the normal span by using certain glandular secretions taken from young, healthy (and usually unwilling) donors. Lyndon developed about this central figure an absorbing and suspenseful melodrama, with no further frills to the plot.[3]

For Rohmer, however, a mere elixir of life was not nearly enough to make a book. His Professor Hadrian von Guhl (lovely name!) must also be an Adept, the possessor of an apparatus enabling him to control men's minds at a distance, and of a "temporal eavesdropper" which enables him to hear and reproduce any conversation or sound out of the past. Von Guhl is also a successful alchemist, a criminal mastermind, and--last but not least--a mad genius bent on conquering the world.

In the hands of a more disciplined or a more restrained writer, this accumulation of improbabilities could have been turned into a memorable and effective book. As it stands, however, GREY FACE is confused, disjointed, full of loose ends--and completely fascinating to read.

In THE BAT FLIES LOW the fantasy element concerns the secret of producing cheap power and light, a secret recorded in the legendary Egyptian Book of Thoth, and

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[3] THE MAN IN HALF MOON STREET was filmed by Paramount in 1944 with Nils Asther in the title role. More recently it was re-made in England as THE MAN WHO COULD CHEAT DEATH, with Anton Diffring. A novel by Barre Lyndon and Jimmy Sangster, based on the film, was released as an Avon paperback.

guarded through the ages by an ancient Order having its headquarters at the Temple of Light, hidden in the deserts of Upper Egypt. The manuscript containing the secret is stolen from the Temple, and sold to Lincoln Hayes, president of a large utilities company in the United States. The First Prophet of the Temple traces the manuscript to New York and manages to steal it back before it has been fully translated. The document shuttles back and forth between New York and Egypt, changing hands a few more times, and the process it describes is finally put into practice. And "In the darkest hours of a very dark night, there appeared an unnatural dawn. Ships two to three hundred miles out at sea experienced broad daylight for periods varying from three to five minutes. Seismic instruments all over the world registered an earthquake in the West. Towering buildings in New York rocked on their foundations . . . ."

The book is marred by Rohmer's too frequent tendency to substitute a mere cataloguing of eccentricities for characterization. It has the further drawback of being both slow-moving and dull. However, it was liked well enough to be reprinted in Famous Fantastic Mysteries, where it performed the positive service of inspiring a beautiful Lawrence cover painting.

Rohmer's lone non-fiction book, THE ROMANCE OF SORCERY, fits as well under the classification of fantasy as anywhere else. The bulk of the book consists of biographies of five famous "sorcerers:" Appolonius of Tyana, Nostradamus, Dr. John Dee, Cagliostro, and Madame Blavatsky. There are in addition chapters on the history of sorcery (in Rohmer's own unique interpretation of the word, which allows him to class the founder of Theosophy as a sorceress) and on the Inquisition and witch trials. The original British edition (1914) is a large, impressive volume, excellently illustrated. The U.S. edition (1924) is considerably abridged.

"MY MAN, . . . RECLOTHE YOUR INDECENTLY NUDE PERSON."

Two of Rohmer's eight volumes of short stories have already been mentioned: THE DREAM DETECTIVE and BIMBASHI BARUK OF EGYPT. Each of these is a collection of stories centering around the same leading character. A third volume of the same type, and Rohmer's first short story collection, is THE EXPLOITS

OF CAPTAIN O'HAGAN. This book appeared only in England, although three of the six stories included were published in McClure's magazine in 1913-1914. The stories are incredibly bad. Captain Bernard O'Hagan is a demented individualist who stalks about London in a silk cape, interfering in other people's business and behaving as if the code duello had not been abolished. For example, in the first "exploit" he befriends a young lady song-writer, comments on what an unusual name she has for a person of the lower classes, beats up her fiance (who, he decides, is not good enough for her), and at gun-point forces a lecherous song publisher to purchase her songs. She, poor thing, is pathetically grateful. O'Hagan, "never for a moment presuming upon his superiority of blood," kisses her hand, claps her father patronizingly on the back, and strides on to new exploits.

Rohmer's other five short story collections are more bearable. The first of these was TALES OF SECRET EGYPT. The book contains twelve stories, six of them concerning a sort of Egyptian Lamont Cranston named Abu Tabah. The stories are narrated by the Egyptian representative of a firm which specializes in manufacturing and selling copies of rare pieces of jewelry. The narrator's wild money-making schemes, always slightly shady, are invariably foiled by Abu Tabah. The remaining six stories include two fine fantasies, "Lord of the Jackals" and "In the Valley of the Sorceress." There is also an amusing Arabian Nights-type tall tale called "Pomegranate Flower."

The next collection, THE HAUNTING OF LOW FENNEL, never appeared as such in the United States. However, six of its seven stories were reprinted in the U.S. edition of TALES OF EAST AND WEST in 1932. Of the three fantasies included, "The Curse of a Thousand Kisses" is the best and most well-known; it has been reprinted at least four times in magazines and anthologies. One of the other stories, "The Master of Hollow Grange," is a very fine borderline horror story. The one story in HAUNTING OF LOW FENNEL that has not been reprinted is "The Blue Monkey," a brief and not very believable murder mystery. It is worth mentioning since it is the first of the three short stories in which Nayland Smith appeared without his usual enemy, Fu Manchu. Although not referred to by name, Smith and Dr. Petrie, who narrates the story, are readily recognizable to anyone

familiar with the first three Fu Manchu books.

Rohmer's best short story collection, and the only one beside THE DREAM DETECTIVE to have been reprinted in paperback form, is TALES OF CHINATOWN. Six of the ten stories included form a loosely connected sequence; two of these have "Red" Kerry as the protagonist, and three others involve Paul Harley. All are very good, the best being "The Daughter of Huang Chow." Three of the remaining stories are even more memorable. "Tcheriapin" is an excellent fantasy, possibly the best story that Rohmer ever wrote, and certainly the most widely reprinted of all his stories. "The Hand of the Mandarin Quong" and "The Dance of the Veils" are highly effective exotic tales.

The British and U.S. editions of TALES OF EAST AND WEST are very distinct books. The British edition appeared first, in September 1932. It contains ten stories, including the two Nayland Smith short stories, "Mark of the Monkey" and "The Turkish Yataghan." In the former, Smith and Dr. Petrie visit Devonshire for a short holiday (after the events of THE HAND OF FU MANCHU) and encounter a murderer who dispatches his victims with a poisonous fungus (of Oriental origin, naturally). In the latter story, the narrator and hero of THE DAUGHTER OF FU MANCHU and THE MASK OF FU MANCHU returns to London's Chinatown for a nostalgic visit, accompanied by Smith, who is now Assistant Commissioner of Police. The two men are immediately involved in a murder investigation. The murder turns out to be a very ordinary crime of passion, and is solved in off-hand fashion by Smith. The last story in the collection is "The M'Villin," probably the only one of Rohmer's very early tales (it appeared in Pearson's Magazine for December 1906, under the byline A. Sarsfield Ward) to be preserved outside the original magazine.

The American edition of TALES OF EAST AND WEST was published by Doubleday for The Crime Club, Inc., in 1933. It bears the subtitle "Thirteen little masterpieces of death and fear and terror." It contains five of the stories from the British edition, the six stories reprinted from THE HAUNTING OF LOW FENNEL, and two additional stories from Collier's.

Rohmer's last short story collection was SALUTE TO BAZARADA AND OTHER STORIES. This is another of the titles published only in England, and is probably the rarest of all of Rohmer's books. The title story is a

"novel," cobbled together out of six short stories that were published in Collier's in 1937 and 1938. The stories involve a magician and mountebank named Bazarada; some of these stories, in their original Collier's form, were reprinted in the Saint Detective Magazine several years ago. SALUTE also contains three Paul Harley short stories; one of these, "Skull Face," is a virtually rewritten version of "The Man with the Shaven Skull" from TALES OF CHINATOWN.

In addition to the stories which are included in the various collections, there are many Rohmer short stories that have appeared only in magazine form. Many of them are very good: ghost stories like "Affair of Honor" from This Week and "The Broken Blade" from Blue Book, and mood-pieces and character studies such as "Jamaican Rose" from This Week (which was rewritten and included as an episode in the Sumuru novel, THE FIRE GODDESS), "Midnight Rendezvous" from Collier's, and "Narky" from Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. We can hope that one or more further collections of Rohmer stories will be published, to give these tales and others like them a deserved home in book form.

THE BOOKS OF SAX ROHMER--A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

Insofar as possible, books are listed according to the date of the first edition, either British or U.S. More detailed bibliographic information on each book will appear in future issues of the Review.

THE MYSTERY OF DR. FU-MANCHU London: Methuen 1913
(Amer. title: THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU-MANCHU)
THE SINS OF SEVERAC BABLON London: Cassell 1914
THE ROMANCE OF SORCERY London: Methuen 1914
THE YELLOW CLAW N. Y.: McBride, Nast 1915
THE EXPLOITS OF CAPTAIN O'HAGAN London: Jarrolds 1916
THE DEVIL DOCTOR London: Methuen 1916
(Amer. title: THE RETURN OF DR. FU-MANCHU)
THE SI-FAN MYSTERIES London: Methuen 1917
(Amer. title: THE HAND OF FU MANCHU)
THE ORCHARD OF TEARS London: Methuen 1918
TALES OF SECRET EGYPT London: Methuen 1918
THE QUEST OF THE SACRED SLIPPER London: Pearson 1919
DOPE London: Cassell 1919
THE GOLDEN SCORPION London: Methuen 1919
THE GREEN EYES OF BAST London: Cassell 1920
THE HAUNTING OF LOW FENNEL London: Pearson 1920
THE DREAM DETECTIVE London: Jarrolds 1920

BAT WING London: Cassell 1921
FIRE-TONGUE London: Cassell 1921
TALES OF CHINATOWN London: Cassell 1922
BROOD OF THE WITCH-QUEEN Garden City: Doubleday, Page 1924
GREY FACE Garden City: Doubleday, Page 1924
YELLOW SHADOWS Garden City: Doubleday, Page 1926
MOON OF MADNESS Garden City: Doubleday, Page 1927
SHE WHO SLEEPS Garden City: Doubleday, Doran 1928
THE EMPEROR OF AMERICA N. Y.: The Crime Club 1929
THE BOOK OF FU MANCHU London: Hurst, Blackett 1929
(first 3 Fu Manchu books; Amer. edition also includes THE GOLDEN SCORPION)
THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED N. Y.: The Crime Club 1930
DAUGHTER OF FU MANCHU N. Y.: The Crime Club 1931
YU'AN HEE SEE LAUGHS N. Y.: The Crime Club 1932
TALES OF EAST AND WEST London: Cassell 1932
THE MASK OF FU MANCHU N. Y.: The Crime Club 1932
FU MANCHU'S BRIDE N. Y.: The Crime Club 1933
THE TRAIL OF FU MANCHU N. Y.: The Crime Club 1934
THE BAT FLIES LOW N. Y.: The Crime Club 1935
PRESIDENT FU MANCHU N. Y.: The Crime Club 1936
WHITE VELVET Garden City: Doubleday, Doran 1936
THE GOLDEN SCORPION OMNIBUS N. Y.: Grosset & Dunlap 1938
(THE GOLDEN SCORPION and DOPE)
A SAX ROHMER OMNIBUS N. Y.: Grosset & Dunlap 1938
(THE YELLOW CLAW and TALES OF SECRET EGYPT)
SALUTE TO BAZARADA AND OTHER STORIES London: Cassell 1938
THE DRUMS OF FU MANCHU N. Y.: The Crime Club 1939
THE ISLAND OF FU MANCHU N. Y.: The Crime Club 1941
SEVEN SINS N. Y.: McBride 1943
EGYPTIAN NIGHTS London: Robert Hale 1944
(Amer. title: BIMBASHI BARUK OF EGYPT)
SHADOW OF FU MANCHU N. Y.: The Crime Club 1948
HANGOVER HOUSE N. Y.: Random House 1949
NUDE IN MINK N. Y.: Fawcett Publ. 1950
(Brit. title: SINS OF SUMURU)
SUMURU N. Y.: Fawcett Publ. 1951
(Brit. title: SLAVES OF SUMURU)
THE FIRE GODDESS N. Y.: Fawcett Publ. 1952
(Brit. title: VIRGIN IN FLAMES)
RETURN OF SUMURU N. Y.: Fawcett Publ. 1954
(Brit. title: SAND AND SATIN: A SUMURU STORY)
THE MOON IS RED London: Jenkins 1954
SINISTER MADONNA N. Y.: Fawcett Publ. 1956
RE-ENTER FU MANCHU N. Y.: Fawcett Publ. 1957
EMPEROR FU MANCHU London: Jenkins 1959

THE INCREDIBLE CAPTAIN O'HAGAN

by Alvin F. Germeshausen

Our subject is not a sleuth and would have hotly resented praise as a detective. Nor is he a Raffles, although he frequently oversteps the boundaries of the law. He may be described as a modern Robin Hood with the grand manner--a Saint from Debrett.

Born in 1880, Captain the Hon. Bernard O'Hagan, V. C., D.S.O., is many years younger than Holmes or Thorndyke and is about the age of Solar Pons. He knew none of these great men and would have disdained such contacts.

The O'Hagan deeds are recorded in THE EXPLOITS OF CAPTAIN O'HAGAN, narrated by fellow Irishman Lawrence Raymond and agented by Sax Rohmer.

The third son of the fifth Earl of Dunnamore entered life at the family castle near Drogheda in County Meath. Two years at Trinity College, Dublin, preceded entry into the Military College of Aldershot, whence he emerged in 1901 in time to participate in the bloodiest engagements of the Boer War. Serving with the Irish Guards our hero gained his two coveted decorations, three mentions in dispatches, a captaincy, and much newspaper fame.

Impatient of service under "tradesmen's sons," O'Hagan left the army in 1910 to live in the grand manner on nothing a year. Served by the muscular, unobtrusive, and discreet Patrick Donahue, he graced rooms facing Whitehall, frequented his club, the "Junior Guards," and expressed his distaste for democracy by word and deed. Petronius, Omar, and Twain reflect his attitude and literary taste.

The invaluable Patrick is described as "a man of attainments; a valet unsurpassable, of eye more true for the fold of a cloak than any modiste of the Rue de la Paix; a colourist in whom discord between a scarf and a soft shirt produces a blanching of the cheek; who, of a hundred waistcoats, having a hundred shades, will unerringly select the waistcoat for the occasion." He was sturdy, of medium height, had well-brushed hair the color of stale mustard, and a ruddy complexion. The effect created by his large upper lip and truculent jaw was softened by twinkling sky-blue eyes.

So much for the man; now to describe the master. Tall, agile, dark--wearing a moustache--O'Hagan singularly resembled his reputed ancestor Charles II, truly a royal Stuart. Each evening saw him clothed in evening dress, wearing a brilliant satin-lined cloak, carrying a heavy

ebony cane, and sporting a large monocle dependant on a black ribbon. Imperious and demanding in manner, he is described as either "a polished kind of bully--or merely of a sensitive aristocratic temperament that suffers affront where one more callous would be conscious of none . . . he would patronize the shade of Julius Caesar . . . it would afford no small surprise to see the Premier blacking his boots." His attitude was "to permit any boor to wear a dress suit is to kill chivalry."

His manners and demands caused many altercations whence he emerged triumphant. Regretfully without a sword for evening wear, the Captain had acquired skill in the Higher Jiu-Jitsu or "Art of Gentle Thought," learned at the hands of Master Shashu Myuka of Nagasaki.

The six narratives related in the EXPLOITS depict a variety of benefactions, dispensed with the impressive dignity of a Richelieu. In "He Patronises Pamela," a gentle girl composer is launched on the road to fortune by the ruthless persuasion of a somewhat unsavory publisher. The persuader is a revolver, which leaves the scene in the pocket of O'Hagan's confederate, narrator Raymond, in timely fashion. Incidentally O'Hagan displays the rare talent of a sensitive pianist.

"He Clears the Course for True Love" again shows our noble soul aiding girlhood in distress. Pained that beauty and gentle blood should meet with nouveau riche, he persuades the unrighteous suitor to abandon suit and endow the poor but worthy rival with a good job. The insouciance of the strongarm methods may seem incredible here but rings reasonably true in the narrative. The Captain is "a kind of directing Beneficence, which from an Olympic height smoothed the tangled skeins of lesser lives . . . . It is a never-ending source of regret that we have no Velasquez today . . . O'Hagan would inspire such a one to a great masterpiece."

"He Meets the Leopard Lady" tells of the ill-fated efforts of an American press agent who sought to publicize a derring-do novelist and an exotic dancer by a mock quarrel, to be followed by a fake duel. Unfortunately for these well-planned ploys, the beautiful La Belle Lotus possessed a very ugly husband, Trooper Belcher--pugilist, drunkard, and jailbird. He displayed maniacal jealousy toward any purported admirers of his wife, and thoroughly demolished all plotters except, of course, the Captain. O'Hagan summarizes, "It is singularly illustrative of the obscure psychology of the lower orders, this marrying

habit of Continental music-hall artistes . . . prize fighters or bookmakers. It is a process of natural selection."

"He Buries an Old Love" displays our subject's hauteur as he reconciled a childhood girl-friend with her misinformed husband. "He could so enter the House of Lords as to visit consternation upon every peer present, and to set the bishops reviewing their pasts with grave misgivings. O'Hagan is a mannerist of genius." In any event, true love was triumphant thanks to swagger and inspired misrepresentation. "At such times a lie becomes a virtue."

"He Deals With Don Juan" tells how O'Hagan rescued a friend's threatened marriage by beating and humiliating a dashing captain of the Grays who had scored innumerable conquests. In this account we see our aristocrat at home in "chambers overlooking Whitehall . . . with arabesques dimly perceptible in the blue rays of a hanging lamp . . . the plash of water in the tiny marble basin containing golden carp . . . wore a loose blue robe upon a cushioned divan . . . smoked a Persian water pipe."

"He Honors the Grand Duke" describes a daring deed performed by O'Hagan to earn a good supper, which his usually impecunious condition would have denied him. He insinuated himself into the apartment of a Slavic Grand Duke on the pretext of warning him about conspirators. The purported conspiracy of patriotic Poles versus the Czar proved true and our soldier contributed to the forces of light and chivalry. He is very persuasive; "one can imagine his prevailing upon the united monarchies of Europe to present a fleet of dreadnaughts to Great Britain as a little token of esteem."

So much for the documentation provided by Rohmer; we may surmise that Captain O'Hagan returned to the colors in 1914 to gain wounds and honors in plenty. Unsympathetic to the Irish troubles ("spare the axe and spoil the people"), yet he turned in his papers in 1922, retiring as Lt.-Colonel. The year 1939 saw him back in the Guards, a warrior in many theatres; a friend of the great, he succumbed to many wounds and strains in 1950 as Brigadier Sir Bernard O'Hagan, K.C.M.G., V.C., D.S.O.

Descendant of seven generations of soldiers, his ancestors served with D'Artagnan in Louis XIII's Musketeers, probably fought with Prince Rupert, and, at the Boyne, filled places in the Irish Brigade. "He was a gentleman full three hundred years behind his time, the only living being who had recovered The Grand Manner."

THE ROMANCE OF SCARABS

by Luther Norris

Standing in front of the long, narrow glass cases of scarabs in the Cairo Museum one can readily understand the fascination these sacred beetles of Ancient Egypt have for mystery and detective story writers. In The Eye of Osiris, by R. Austin Freeman, Mr. John Bellingham wears "an ugly blue scarab" suspended from his watch chain. In another Dr. Thorndyke adventure, The Blue Scarab, the ancient Egyptian amulet is an essential part of the story. In the book In Re: Sherlock Holmes, by August Derleth, Solar Pons, upon meeting Dr. Lyndon Parker says, "Your scarab pin suggests Egypt and, if I'm not mistaken, the envelope on which you have been writing is one from Shepheard's. From Cairo then." And who can forget S. S. Van Dine's The scarab Murder Case?

It is small wonder then that Sax Rohmer, a student of Egyptian lore, hieroglyphics, and the occult, should have been fascinated by this curious symbol of Ancient Egypt. In The Bat Flies Low, the Hayes Collection contains "scarabs, rings, and various kinds of Egyptian jewelry." A "beautifully carved scarab of lapis lazuli" is mentioned several times in Bimbashi Baruk of Egypt. In Tales of Secret Egypt, the death-ring of Sneferu is "a green scarab, upon which is written the name of a king of Egypt." In She Who Sleeps, from the balcony of Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo Barry Cumberland watches vendors "of scarabs incredibly old." And, in the same adventure, Danbazzar wears a scarab ring upon his ringer. Again, in The Mask of Fu Manchu, Shan Greville is presented with a string of pink pearls (for his bride) coiled around a scarab ring--the signet ring of Khufu, supposed builder of the Great Pyramid. The priceless gift is from no less a person than Dr. Fu Manchu himself!

Although I brought back several amulets from Egypt, my favorite is a gold reproduction of a 14th century soapstone scarab inscribed with the name of Ramses II, the cartouche bearing the hieroglyph of the Ankh, or sign of life everlasting. The original is in a private collection in New York.

During my stay in Cairo and Luxor I had ample time to obtain some first-hand knowledge about scarabs from Abrahim Fayed, an authorized guide having a diploma in archeology. Our long talks on the bridge over the Nile,

in the shadow of the Semiramis Hotel, found me glancing over my shoulder for a glimpse of Nayland Smith or Dr. Petrie.

The scarab, of course, is closely identified with ancient Egyptian religion. The ancient Egyptians were firm believers in a future existence; body and soul would be reunited. This explains their worthy efforts to preserve the body after death. They knew that it was to be reunited with the soul, and they showed masterly skill in the science of preservation. Embalmment today still has very much to learn from the ancient Egyptian system, perfected nearly sixty centuries ago.

All their efforts were not restricted to the preservation of the corpse. The soul was a matter of serious concern, too, and this was entrusted to the scarab. Its purpose was to help the soul, or Ka, through the last judgment before Osiris. An inscription on the cartouche, or back, of the scarab asked the heart not to betray the soul.

The scarab also was considered the emissary of good. Special devotion was shown to it by the living, and it was used by them as an amulet, a lucky charm to keep away the evil eye. Its power was considerable in the eyes of the ancient Egyptians, and also was acknowledged by the Greeks and Romans.

But what is the scarab, really? Nothing more than a little beetle, still very abundant in Egypt, which has the secular habit of laying its eggs in a small, round pellet of mud. It intrigued the ancient Egyptians to see this pellet buried in the sand from which, after a time, a living creature emerged. This was the natural result of the sun's rays hatching the eggs, but to the ancient Egyptians it proved the supernatural power of the scarab to revive itself after death.

Thus is explained the special veneration in which the scarab was held amongst all classes of Ancient Egypt. Pharaohs wore it as one of their sacred ornaments. High priests offered special incantations and prayers for it, while princes and other high dignitaries had their names and official functions inscribed on its cartouche and used it as a seal. It was made of amethyst, turquoise, lapis lazuli, carnelian, steatite, or ordinary green-colored stone.

Vestiges of the scarab's mysterious power are still apparent. Old scarabs are valuable collectors' items.

Copies of original scarabs are set into rings, pins, bracelets, cuff links, earrings, and necklaces. Many reproductions are faithfully copied in soapstone, ebony, gold, silver, brass, and copper.

Where is it possible to buy a genuine scarab and be sure that it's authentic? Well, you might try the Wapping Curio Shop of Morris Klaw!

ED. NOTE--Or you might send 50¢ to Luther Norris, 3844 Watseka Avenue, Culver City, California 90231. He is offering a 1" x 1½" plastic reproduction of a scarab that bears the name of Tuthmosis III, who was king of Egypt from 1504 to 1450 B.C. The name is written within the cartouche, with a uraeus cobra on either side. The original scarab, which is in the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, was made at the Greek colony of Naukratis in the Nile Delta after the 7th century B.C. This offer is limited to the first thirty Society members who respond (<u>one to a customer, please</u>).